Interview with U. Alexis Johnson

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

UNDER SECRETARY U. ALEXIS JOHNSON

Interviewed by: Paige E. Mulhollan, LBJ Library

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Q: Let's just identify you, sir. You're U. Alexis Johnson, and currently, you're Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, but during the Johnson Administration, you served variously as Deputy Under Secretary of Political Affairs, as Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam, and finally, for the last two years of the Administration, as Ambassador to Japan. Those three positions . . .

JOHNSON: That's correct. I occupied the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs position twice.

Q: Right.

JOHNSON: In the early part of the Administration, and then I went out to Vietnam, and I came back and occupied the position again and then I went to Japan.

Q: Of course, you've had a long, long career in the Diplomatic Service. Have you ever had any occasion to know Mr. Johnson, either socially or on business, prior to the time he became Vice President?

JOHNSON: No, I did not. That was my first association with him.

Q: As Vice President; at that time you were Deputy Under Secretary in the Kennedy Administration.

JOHNSON: That's right, in the Kennedy Administration, yes.

Q: Did Vice President Johnson play any role that involved your office during the years he was Vice President?

JOHNSON: Yes, my first contact with him was a fairly intimate contact when he made his first trip to Southeast Asia; that was in May of 1961, as I recall it. I had come back from Bangkok in April, and when he made that trip, I was involved in two things. First, he asked for my staff aide, Francis Meloy, Frank Meloy as he's normally called, to go with him. This had been suggested to him by Senator [Mike] Mansfield, who knew Frank very well. Frank was not anxious to do so, nor was I anxious to lose Frank; but Mansfield called me, and the Vice President called me and made it very clear they wanted Frank Meloy. So Frank Meloy went along.

Q: (Laughter). Right.

JOHNSON: And I was designated by the Secretary to be control point in the Department, you might say, and the contact point for the Vice President on the trip. So, his communications back, and the handling of the trip insofar as the Washington end was concerned, and the substantive side, I handled. And I talked to him a couple of times, of course, before he left on the trip. But one of my first real contacts with him was when he was in Saigon, I might recount. I think it is an incident that's typical of him and was interesting to me.

Q: That's the kind of thing we're particularly interested in, too.

JOHNSON: He had been told by the military before he left what a wonderful communications system we had and all he had to do was pick up the phone and he could

call anybody, and you know how he liked to pick up the phone. And I got a call from him from Saigon—fairly early in the morning, our time here, which was late in the evening, their time there—asking my clearance on what he proposed to say in the communique. And the connection was extremely bad; only once or twice was I ever able to hear his voice. He talked into the phone, and a sergeant in Manila relayed it to a sergeant in Honolulu to a sergeant over in the White House, who relayed it to me. This was obviously a very unsatisfactory method of communication. I kept going back and saying, “Put it on the cable; put it on the wire, and I can have it inside of an hour, and I can have the answer back to you inside of an hour.” But he kept insisting on talking, and we talked most of the day. I say “talked”; we had intermittent contact through this chain most of the daylight hours here, which was all night out there, their time, and it was very unsatisfactory, of course, and I know that he was very unhappy. But he was . . You know, when he got stubborn, he got stubborn, and he was going to do this by telephone, come hell or high water.

Q: (Laughter). He'd been told that there were good communications, and he was going to use them!

JOHNSON: He was going to use them. And, we finally settled it late in the evening, our time here, which is early morning their time there. Frank Meloy told me that . . . Frank was with him the whole time. Frank kept telling him the same thing I was telling him, you know, put it on a cable and I could have it in thirty minutes. So they got on a plane, still in their black tie from the dinner they'd gone to. Frank came back from that trip utterly exhausted, and went to bed for two weeks; he's a fairly stout fellow . . .

Q: Mr. Johnson wore him out with . . .

JOHNSON: He just wore him out with activity. Mr. Johnson took to him very much and used Frank very heavily on the trip. When they got back, Mr. Johnson said he'd like to have Frank come up on the Hill to be his assistant, and Frank had no enthusiasm for this

after his previous experience. He, of course, respected and liked Mr. Johnson, but he found working for him extremely strenuous. And, this put Frank in a somewhat difficult position. SO the Vice President asked me for Frank; I made various excuses: that it was hard for me to let him go; and he [Johnson] kept [being] more and more insistent. I had to be more and more specific that I didn't want to let Frank go. So, he and Mrs. Johnson then started working on Frank, invited him out to the house, had him for barbecues, and gave him a real rush, if you will.

Q: The treatment, as they call it.

JOHNSON: But this didn't change Frank's view on it. So it finally ended up, he didn't get Frank.

Q: That's One of the few cases I know of . . .

JOHNSON: He never forgot that; he never forgot that; he always reminded me that I'd refused to let him have Frank. Over the years, any time—I wouldn't say any time—but many times when I would see him, he'd say, “You know, Alex, you said 'no' to me on Meloy.” (Laughter).

He had a long memory, but to his credit, I never felt that he ever held this against me; but he never forgot it, either.

Q: His critics frequently say that when he became President, he didn't know too much or care too much about foreign policy or affairs, generally. When he went out to Vietnam in this particular instance, where you were close to the situation, did he really master some of the realities of the situation there? Or was it simply a quick, good-will trip that he didn't really involve himself in totally?

JOHNSON: I feel it was primarily the latter, that he didn't really get involved in the substance. He had not had sufficient time, really, to get himself involved. And it was primarily a good-will trip at that time.

Q: Did he talk to you, or did you de-brief him when he came back?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, I got . . Not individually, no. As I recall it, I went over to a White House meeting at which he de-briefed the present NSC. I forget the exact details but I don't recall any particular individual conversations with him. No.

Q: From that meeting, did you get the idea that he had formed strong impressions on the trip, about Vietnam generally, or . . .?

JOHNSON: Yes, I would say so, I would say so. I do feel that he did.

Q: In any particular way, or . . .?

JOHNSON: Well, I think that he felt that we needed to support them. In fact, the discussion we had with regard to the communique was, as I recall it, pretty much . . . The language involved his desire to put in language which I felt was stronger than we were prepared to see at that time, at least. Q: His view was stronger...?

JOHNSON: His view was that of the stronger language, as I recall it, than I felt the Administration back here felt would be Wise at that time.

Q: His impression of Diem and his government was as it has generally been written to be? That is, he felt that it was salvageable and should be . .?

JOHNSON: Yes, yes, yes, yes. I think so. I think that'd be fair to say.

Q: Were there other instances where you were close to the Vice President?

JOHNSON: Let's see. As Vice President, no. I, of course, saw him over at the White House meetings and things of this kind, but I had no direct business association with him during the time when he was Vice President.

Q: You served through the transition in a high position in the State Department. You might be in a good position to draw some comparisons between the two Administrations.

Did Mr. Kennedy, for example, and Mr. Johnson look at, or feel about, the State Department differently that you could notice from your vantage point?

JOHNSON: Yes, to a degree. First, I'd say that Mr. Rusk made a very, very deliberate effort to keep him informed during the time that Mr. Johnson was Vice President. He saw him, himself, personally. And as a matter of fact, when he didn't get Frank Meloy, we assigned a Foreign Service Officer to him. I was in charge of getting the officers, and assigning them and, seeing that they were serviced and were able to service him. So my contact was primarily through this means.

Q: They were just for briefing, mainly for briefing purposes?

JOHNSON: Keeping him informed, yes. We assigned a Foreign Service Officer that was on his staff full-time to work for him and keep him in contact with the Department on a day-to-day basis. And in addition, the Secretary—Secretary Rusk—made a very special effort to keep him informed and to—I don't want to say cultivate him, but—to keep a close relationship with him. And this, of course, paid off very much at the time that he became President, because he already knew the Secretary; he already knew the Department. And in general, I would say that he was inclined to lean on the Department and lean on the Secretary more, when it came to foreign policy matters, than Kennedy had. Kennedy tended to run things, as I've always said, by seminar. He'd get a lot of people in—people who had responsibility and people who had no responsibility—when any foreign policy matter came up, and we somewhat had the feeling that the Secretary of State and the

Secretary of Defense were just members of a seminar. He didn't have the same sense of the Executive hierarchy, if you will, and Executive responsibilities that President Johnson had. In that regard, I'd say President Johnson operated in a more traditional, orderly, if you will, fashion, as far as the departments were concerned, than Kennedy did. Although, of course, as you well know, Johnson, like any President, of course, calls on a lot of outside advice and outside opinions, which he's perfectly, of course, entitled to do. That's . . .

Q: Was he more interested in things like administration than President Kennedy was, or did he ever evidence any interest in something so mundane as administering the Department?

JOHNSON: No, not, I wouldn't say, in administration as such. He'd get himself, of course, involved in minute things at times—you know, these guards that we have down here and you have to show your pass now to get into the State Department. I don't know whether you know the story of why they are there.

Q: No, does it involve , Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON: It involves Mr. Johnson. M. Johnson read the newspaper and he saw on TV, of course, that some girl was supposed to have been molested in a State Department elevator. At that time, anybody could come into the building freely, during working hours, during office hours. He called up the Secretary and said he wanted him to do something about this and to establish some controls over who gets into the building. And he called Bob McNamara and told him to do the same thing over at the Pentagon. So our administrative people rushed around, and put up those fences down here, and got the guards there. And that's the way we have our guards on the . . .

Q: You know, I've called on dozens of people that were in the State Department, all the seventh floor people in the Johnson Administration, and that's the first time I've heard the story. That's very interesting.

JOHNSON: Bob McNamara never carried through.

Q: Oh, he didn't?

JOHNSON: You can still walk through . . . You can still walk into the Pentagon openly, but you can't walk into the State Department.

Q: Well, I'll be. That's really interesting. You're generally credited with being one of the prime movers of what ultimately became the SIG-IRG [Special Intelligence Group-Interdepartmental Regional Group] system. Did Mr. Johnson have anything to do with that at all?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, very much so. Well, yes, he did. You know, Max [General Maxwell] Taylor and I came back . . . He told Max that he . . . well, I wouldn't say . . . It's a little hard to say where the initiative came from. He told Max that he wanted Max to stay on with him as adviser. Max was very, very interested and concerned in this problem of coordination of foreign activities back here in Washington. And Max talked to me a lot about it. And he got a mandate . . . I think this is more Max's initiative, perhaps — but you should talk to him about that — than Mr. Johnson's to do something about organization here in Washington. Because seeing it out in the field of Saigon, he saw the weaknesses in it. So Max got a mandate to work up what eventually became the SIG-IRG NSAM [National Security Action Memorandum] 341. I worked very closely with him on that, and we negotiated that out. Matter of fact, Max wanted to write something that was much stronger than I thought was possible and feasible in the Washington scene. What eventually resulted even brought some outcries from the other departments and agencies. And the President presented this to the Cabinet meeting; but he'd somewhat lost interest in it by then, and he did it in a fairly pro forma way.

Q: That hurt his presentation then?

JOHNSON: Yes, it did. It didn't have quite the bite that both Max and I had hoped that it would have, although, I think it would be useful.

Q: You'd been involved for a long time, as Deputy Under Secretary with coordination with the Defense Department.

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, yes.

Q: Was that the major intent of the SIG-IRG thing, to tie the State Department and the Defense Department together?

JOHNSON: No, not.. yes, to some degree. But equally, I would say, the CIA, and AID, and the Department of Agriculture, and the Treasury, and the other departments. No, relations with the Defense Department were good, if I can say so; coordination was close. We had a minimal amount of problems on this. Rusk and McNamara worked very close together. However, Dean Rusk was never very enthusiastic about this SIG-IRG directive, because he was not a bureaucratic builder. He had great respect for the roles and responsibilities of his Cabinet colleagues, and was very, very reluctant to intervene in what he felt was their business; and he never asserted himself as vigorously in the direction of matters as some of us would like to have seen him at times, but . . .

Q: The reason I dwell on this is that some of the critics have implied, at least, that the State Department input to Vietnam policy, particularly, was never as strong as Defense Department, or not adequately strong to balance the Defense Department.

JOHNSON: Well, I don't know. I wouldn't . . . To a degree you might say that was true. But it wasn't a matter of State Department input being different from the Defense Department. In general, Dean Rusk and McNamara saw this thing through very similar eyes; and I think most of us over here in the Department saw it through very similar eyes. And it wasn't a matter, at that time at least, of State Department doves attempting to hold back hawks over in the Defense Department. Throughout the Vietnamese affair, things never,

ever divided themselves very clearly along departmental lines, as far as views were concerned . . .

Q: There was not a State Department view versus . . . ?

JOHNSON:Defense view. You found strong views pro and con in both departments. I see.In fact, over in the Defense Department, John McNaughton, during the time that he was Assistant Secretary of ISA, took a very . . Well, I hesitate, but we have to use these terms of hawk and dove.

Q: Tack them?

JOHNSON: Tack them, yes. [John McNaughton had] a much more bearish, and restrained, and dovish view on Vietnam than, say, I did. I used to argue very vigorously with John about this.

Q: That stayed the tradition of the ISA shop apparently, clear on through.

JOHNSON: Yes, that's right, that's right, yes.

Q: Contrary to the public opinion that the Defense Department were up in arms all the time.

JOHNSON: Yes, yes, yes. The Secretary, you know, Dean Rusk felt very, very strongly on Vietnam, in part, because he'd gone through the Korean affair. You recall, he was Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs back at the time of Korea; and I was his deputy at that time.And having gone through that Korean experience, all those who were involved in it felt very deeply that there were matters of principle and issue involved in this Vietnam affair, extending beyond Vietnam itself.

Q: As someone who's been involved in it for so many years, in that general area of the world, how would you estimate the status of the commitment at the point at which Mr. Johnson became President?

JOHNSON: Well, I would say that we could have—it was conceivable for us todraw back from it. There would have been costs, but ! think, up to the point, up to February 7,1965, when we undertook the bombing of the North, I think that was the point of no return.

Q: It was reversible . . .

JOHNSON: Up to that point, in theory at least, it was reversible; but we'd have lost South Vietnam, of course; we'd have had all the problems that would have existed in the rest of the area; but I would say that that was really the point of no return. And this was a part of the reason that Max Taylor, and I, and Westy—Westmoreland—recommended the bombing of the North, because our problem in South Vietnam at that time was that they were fearful that we were going to draw back.

Q: I see.

JOHNSON: And our recommendation on the bombing of the North was very heavily predicated upon the necessity of demonstrating in the South that we were not going to pull out and leave them; that this would be something that we could do that would change the psychology in the South, which was at a very low point.

Q: When did this advice begin?

JOHNSON: I would say about December of 1964.

Q: Before then, there'd been no hard and fast decisions made?

JOHNSON: No, and the decisions weren't made; there were no hard and fast decisions. Of course, we had no troops there. We had our advisory personnel and logistics personnel,

but we had no troops. And you had the great turmoil in the South. I had six coups and attempted coups during the period that I was there.

Q: That was just about a year.

JOHNSON: That's right. About fourteen months, I was there. And the problem down there was that they thought we were going to pull out. This was a part of the problem. I'd say none of us out there—neither Max nor Westy nor myself—had any thought that bombing the North was going to win the war. Our first objective, I'd say, was primarily that of the psychology in the South. Secondly, our objective was to do what could be done to make the movement of supplies more difficult. None of us—particularly Max and I, who were very familiar with the Korean affair— expected any real interdiction; as the term is used for supplies. And then, in the event we did lose in the South and the thing did collapse on us —it looked like it might collapse at that point—we would demonstrate that the other side just doesn't get off free in these situations. These were basis upon which we made our original recommendations.

Q: During the time when, as you say, the commitment might have been reversible, was there anybody in very high position advising President Johnson to cut his losses and withdraw?

JOHNSON: During that critical period, I was out in Vietnam itself. So I can't speak

Q: What about before September of 1964 or so?

JOHNSON: I can't recall anybody particularly. I would say John McNaughton over in Defense [was] possibly a little more bearish than others, as I recall, during that period. I can't recall any individuals, particularly, that raised the question. Of course, our commitment was very limited at the time. It wasn't subject to the same attack that it later became subject to. I can't recall any specific individual that was recommending this at this point in time.

Q: Did Mr. Johnson, himself, even get closely engaged in the Vietnam problem, say, prior to the election of 1964?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. We used to have meetings on it. I wouldn't say he was deeply engaged. The deterioration in the situation out there and the facing up to the issue came after . . . It came in the latter part of '64 and, of course, the early part of '65. And I was out there at the time.

Q: How did he talk you into going out there? That was, at least in title, I suppose, a demotion. Did he talk to you personally and convince you to go?

JOHNSON: Well, he did talk to me, primarily, through Dean Rusk. I was approached through Dean Rusk, on whether I would go out as Ambassador. And then I said, “Of course, I'll do anything I'm asked to do.” And then the thought of Max Taylor going out came up, and I think it was Mr. Johnson's idea to send both of us.

Q: Create a new position?

JOHNSON: Create a new position. And Dean Rusk . . Let's see. I thought maybe I was going to go. Then Dean Rusk called me, and said he'd just had a call from the President, and would I go along with Max? This thought had never occurred to me, of course, and I said, “Sure, Max and I are old friends.” We were language officers together at Japan, 1935. He was the captain, and I was the vice consul, and we'd known each other for years. I wouldn't have readily accepted this kind of what could be a very difficult relationship with anybody else, but he and I had known each other so long, and we thought so much the same about things, that I had no doubt about it. And he [Rusk] was sitting there at his desk; and he had the President on the other end of the line; and I said, “Yes, of course.” And then he said, “What would you like to be called?” I had the rank then of a Career Ambassador. And I was, of course, reluctant . . After all, I didn't want to drop that title. He said, “What about Assistant to the Ambassador, or Deputy to the Ambassador?” And I

said, “No, that doesn't . . . “ I said, “What about Deputy Ambassador?” And he said to the President, “What about Deputy Ambassador?” “Okay.” And so that's the origin of the title of Deputy Ambassador.

Q: Long, thoughtful consideration of that. (Laughter).

JOHNSON: Thoughtful consideration of it, yes. So I went out—that was on a Wednesday, I think it was—and said goodbye to my wife and family and got right on a KC-135 the next day and went right out, non-stop. And then Max Taylor followed me later.

Q: Was there a fairly clear division between your responsibilities and duties, between you and General Taylor?

JOHNSON: No, no. You know we just worked very closely together. In general, of course, I tended to do more of the running of the Embassy, and maintaining contacts with other missions, and the diplomatic conversations, and that type of thing. But we worked very closely together. There was never any Oh, I should say this was on a Wednesday, and I left on Friday, it was. There's an incident here that I think is interesting.

That night - the night I'd accepted, as I recall it - I know there was a reception. I'm trying to think .....I think it was at the Indonesian Embassy. Can't remember who was here from Indonesia. Well, the Embassy's not important.

Anyway, there was a reception at which the President, President Johnson, was present. This is the kind of a gesture he could do, and I must say, you know, the kind of a thoughtful thing he could do. He spotted my wife over across the room. He didn't know her particularly well, but he knew who she was. He spotted her over there and went over to her, and said he wanted her to know how much he appreciated what I was doing and how much he appreciated her attitude on this. And then he said that—I forget exactly how he put it—but anyway, “I want you to know that you're going to have your ambition.” There'd been considerable talk of my going as Ambassador to Japan prior to this. However, it was

known that she particularly, my wife particularly wanted to go back to Japan. There were a lot of people standing around, and everybody knew what he was talking about.

Well, from that time on, of course, the story was that I was going to go as an Ambassador to Japan. Then when I came back in '66, the Secretary told me that this was still the plan. And you start getting these newspaper leaks and an occasional newspaper story about my going out to Japan. And in his usual fashion, the President got very furious about these stories. And I recall on one occasion, after there'd been a rumor when I was there; he said something about “these boys over in the State Department blabbing off their mouths.” And he, of course, was the origin . . .

Q: Was the source.

JOHNSON: He was the origin, the source of the story from the very beginning. I, obviously, kept very quiet about it, because I well knew his reputation on this. I think that, perhaps, I may be one of the few appointments that was made in the Administration which was not reversed because of newspaper stories.

Q: Maybe he realized he was the leak when he thought about it a little bit.

JOHNSON: He carried through on it. And I must say, I'm very grateful to him for it.

Q: When you were in the mission in Saigon, how much did the mission participate in the tough decision which began almost immediately after you got there?

JOHNSON: Oh, completely so, completely so. One of my first moves, before Max Taylor arrived there, was to set up what we called the Mission Council. That was Commander MACV, who was then General Westmoreland, the agency [CIA] chief, the AID chief, the chief of political section and the two of us [U.A. Johnson and Taylor]. We met regularly and steadily. And all the big decisions were all thoroughly discussed; all our big recommendations, I mean to say, were thoroughly discussed, thrashed out. And we

sent back common messages. I would say that, in general, there was no question that Max Taylor was the leader of the whole efforts and Westy and I worked very, very closely together, and when the big recommendations were being made, we worked drafting the messages; and it was a purely coordinated effort. There was no question of anybody running off on one side or another . . .

Q: And Washington did give you adequate time and adequate encouragement to express your views? I'm thinking particularly, for example, on something fast, like the Tonkin episode, that occurred just a month or so after you were there.

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. No, no, we had an opportunity to express our views. We didn't have as complete information on the Tonkin Gulf business, it being a Naval matter, which was handled through Naval quarters in Honolulu. Our information on that was not as complete as was the information back here in Washington.

Q: I see.

JOHNSON: And the Tonkin Gulf resolution, of course, was originated entirely back here in Washington. I would say the lead on that was very heavily taken here in Washington, rather than coming from Saigon. But we naturally welcomed it from our standpoint there.

Q: What about the diplomatic channels, the various attempts to initiate discussions with the North? Was that conducted separately from the Saigon mission? Or were you in on, say, the [J. Blair] Seaborne mission in '64, for example? Were you in the . . . ?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. I maintained direct personal contact with Seaborne and those affairs.

Q: He brought, as far as you were concerned, no hopeful signs at all?

JOHNSON: That's right, yes, yes. No, I maintained very close contact with him.

Q: The so-called "peace-seeking group" that was ultimately formed here did not, then operate outside of the normal mission effort?

JOHNSON: No, no, no, no. We were involved in all of that.

Q: When did you find out that the decision for the—what you'd been recommending—the bombing of the North had been made? When it occurred, or did you know before that, that . . . ?

JOHNSON: Oh, no, we knew before that, of course. When the orders . . . We got the . . .

Q: Was there a point at which—before, say, the bombing of Pleiku—at which it became clear that this was going to have to be done and that the decision was forthcoming?

JOHNSON: Yes, it was. Well, more or less so. I'd say our exchanges with Washington indicated to us we were moving in that direction. But the President took the view that he would not undertake the bombing of the North until we'd moved out the dependents. And we, in turn, out there, took the view that moving out our dependents would create such a psychological factor out there that we just couldn't live with it. So we were in somewhat of an impasse. We used to get these telegrams about getting our dependents out. We used to come back arguing on it. And so we were in an impasse. We were unwilling to move out our dependents, and Washington was unwilling to start the bombing until we moved out our dependents. Then the Pleiku incident came along, and we were able to do it simultaneously.

Q: But it was not a difference of opinion as to what should be done?

JOHNSON: No, no, no. No, there wasn't. The Pleiku incident gave us the opportunity to do so. Mac Bundy was out there at the time, also. And this, of course, was a big help in getting the decision. And Mac saw the thing, at the time, the way we saw it, and joined us

Q: You said Mac, not Max.

JOHNSON: Mac Bundy.

Q: Just being clear.

JOHNSON: Mac Bundy, that's right.

Q: You get two names like that .

JOHNSON: McGeorge Bundy, McGeorge Bundy, yes.

Q: When did it become clear that we probably were going to have to put in American combat troops as a logical extension of the policy we were following?

JOHNSON: The way this came about . . . and here I have some conscience. When we started the bombing of the North, we had the problem of protecting the airfield of Danang against possible retaliatory raids. And the Marines wanted, and we agreed, that we needed to put in a Hawk battalion there to protect Danang. And then it turned out that, for these Hawks to be effective, they had to be on the hills around Danang; and to protect the Hawks, you had to bring in Marines to protect the Hawks.

Q: You're talking about Hawk missiles here, not hawk. Some of these things, I add for the benefit of people a long time from now that might not know what Hawks are.

JOHNSON: That's right, Hawk missiles; that's right, Hawk missiles. And then the problem of protecting Bien Hoa Air Base near Saigon came up.

It was agreed, that we'd bring in a ground force. I think it was 173rd—172nd, well, it doesn't make any difference—but [it was] an Army force, ground force, to protect the Bien Hoa area. We, at that time, were not contemplating any massive introduction of American forces. And frankly, this grew somewhat like Topsy. I think it's quite clear from the record.

Looking back over Vietnam—I've talked with my colleagues about this—and examining with the wisdom of hindsight, what was done . . . I don't have any . . . I still don't have any real question about what we did. But I do have a conscience that none of us foresaw the extent of the involvement that was going to be required. And the conscience I have is that I don't feel, that at that decision point, we were able to present to the President, in a clear-cut fashion, the alternatives. That is—the situation in which we now find ourselves versus the situation at that time—it was never presented to him in any clear-cut form. The issues have always been presented to him simply in the form—or were at that time—in the form of bringing in a battalion of Marines to protect the Hawks; and then bringing in a battalion of Army troops to protect Bien Hoa; and it sort of grew like Topsy out of that. And in that, I don't think we served the President well. And I don't know; with the wisdom of hindsight, perhaps we should have foreseen the extent of our involvement that might be required. All I can say is, none of us did.

Q: I was going to say, is it perhaps that because nobody disagreed, that this wasn't fleshed out in a more . . .?

JOHNSON: Well, perhaps that's it. Of course, it involved the intention of the other side, which was always difficult to read.

Q: How about that "other side" business? That's a point the critics have been very adamant on, the degree of regular force DVN infiltration by the time we began bombing the North. Were you all confident in Saigon that there were appreciable numbers of DVN units actually in the South at that time?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, yes. You see, we had the—what was it?—the introduction of the . . .

Q: 323's.

JOHNSON: 325th division—elements of it—in December of 1964. This was . . .

Q: They were in as units, not as in . . .

JOHNSON: As units. Oh, yes, yes. Of course, that was long before we started doing any bombing, or introduced any combat ground forces.

Q: So the critics' case here, as far as the information the mission had was concerned, was just wrong?

JOHNSON: Oh, absolutely, absolutely, yes. Yes, yes.

Q: Even some of Mr. Johnson's admirers, and people who think the involvement in Vietnam has been wise, had been critical of what seems to be the lack of influence that the mission there has been able to have with various South Vietnamese governments. [Take] Mr. [Robert] Shaplen's case, for example, that we should have used our leverage at various times-

JOHNSON: All right. We talked a lot about that. We talked a lot about that. And to a degree, we were somewhat subject to what I call “the tyranny of the weak.” This was not due to any lack of trying on our part. In these coup situations, we had some awful rough talking. Max Taylor, as a matter of fact, had such a rough talk with General [Nguyen] Khanh, at one time, that General Khanh refused to have anything to do with him again. And I was appointed a committee of one to work with General Thieu and General Ky—at that time, they were just generals—in bringing about a reconciliation between them . . . (Laughter) . . . General Khanh and Max Taylor.

The one ultimate weapon that we had was the threat of withdrawal and the pulling out of all support. That was not a weapon that was likely to be used. We couldn't bluff about it; the United States can't bluff. If we made the threat, we had to be prepared to carry through with it. And we never found ourselves in such a situation as we felt that we could or should recommend the use of that weapon.

Now, talking about how we should influence things: after General Khanh left, we had the Hung government; and then we had the Phan Huy Quat government. Phan Khac Suu was the Southerner who was the Chief of State; Quat was Prime Minister. The military had, really and truly, turned over the reins of power to the civilian government. In this regard, let me say, I think that we Americans are somewhat enamored of the idea that civilian governments are, by definition, good, and military governments are, by definition, bad. I don't think this follows . . .

Q: Right.

JOHNSON: And this case, I think, well illustrates it. They really had turned over the government to the civilians. Quat had two ministers, in his government, that were of importance to us—one of them, the Minister of Economic Affairs; one of them, the Minister of Interior—that were duds. He knew they were duds; we knew they were duds. But it was a part of the deal—as I said, the political necessities of the time—to take them on.

Well, you talk about influencing governments. We harassed Quat about these two ministers, about getting rid of them, and changing them. And Quat said, you know, “Leave it to me. I'll have to do it in my own time.” But as a result of our pushing him on this, Quat acted on this sooner than he otherwise would have. Phan Khac Suu refused to sign the decree changing the ministers. You see, Quat is a Northerner, a Tonkinese; Phan Khac Suu was a Southerner; and Phan Khac Suu was damned if he was going to let Quat get away with this, you see. And we had the impasse. We kept saying to Quat, what could we do to help, and how could we assist? And again, he said, “Leave it to me.” And the military kept saying the same thing also to him. They were prepared to support him, and what could they do to help? Oh, ten days or so passed; and Quat was obviously losing ground on this. Max Taylor had taken the trip up to Vientiane, Bangkok, and was away . . . Incidentally, it so worked out that every coup and coup attempt, he was away and I was alone there. (Laughter).

Q: Was there any pre-planning on that?

JOHNSON: There was no pre-planning involved in this, but it worked out that way. And about three o'clock in the morning, I got a telephone call from Quat—would I come right over to his office? And I, of course, went over there; and there was Quat sitting on a chair, here, and Thieu, General Thieu, and General Ky sitting on the couch, just the three of them. And Quat said to me they had been discussing the matter; and they'd come to the conclusion that there was no way of getting rid of Phan Khac Suu as Chief of State and resolving the impasse; except for Quat to resign and the military to take over again. And Thieu was going to be Chief of State, and Ky was going to be Prime Minister. I was, of course, taken somewhat aback by this; and I questioned both Thieu and Ky as to their analysis of the situation, the agreement. And I turned to Quat and said, “Are you fully satisfied on this? There's just no other way out of this?” And he said, “No, there's just no other way out of it.” All right. What's an American Ambassador do at three o'clock in the morning in a situation like that? You say that we should, you know, we should have been more vigorous in controlling things. What could you say, except, “God bless you.'.'

Q: It was all agreed on their side.

JOHNSON: It was all agreed. There was nothing to do. That's the story of Thieu and Ky coming into power. All I can say is that they've been there since; and you've had more stability there than you've had in many countries that are not at war.

And the balance of power, of course, has shifted from Ky, now, to Thieu under the new constitution. And I'm just enormously impressed with the degree to which Thieu has grown into being a politician, in the real sense of the term. I, of course, knew him well at that time. We'd been through Several other coups together one way or the other—Ky and Thieu and I—during the middle of the night, and I knew them exceedingly well.

Last time I saw Thieu was when I went through there in January and had a long, long talk with him, a very intimate talk; and I was just very deeply impressed with the degree to which he has turned from being the military type that I'd known into being what I'd call a real political animal. He has real political sense, looking at things in a political way.

Q: What it boils down to, you're saying, then, is that really they know we're not prepared to make the threat of withdrawal; and therefore, there's really no other threat that . . .

JOHNSON: At that time, that's right. That's right. There was no other threat that was credible. You know, you could tell them all, “You've got to get together. All this haggling and fighting among yourselves.” You could preach this to all of them, but how do you make them do it? How do you make them do it?

Thich Tri Quang, the Buddhist. Oh, we spent hours and hours with that fellow. He brought Hung down. Hung was respected. We all liked him. I have enormous respect for him. And Thich Tri Quang brought him down. We'd get Thich Tri Quang in; and lecture him; and pound the table, and all that; but how do you get him to act?

You know, every . . . I often say that, so often, the solutions that people have for foreign policy problems involve having an American ambassador go in and tell a foreign government or a foreign people that they should be something other than what they are. This is not, to me, a very productive course of action. You can influence and guide people within certain parameters, but you've got to recognize the parameters. People are what they are. It doesn't do any good to go in, and pound the table, and tell the Arabs they should love the Israelis, or the Israelis they should love the Arabs, or the Pakistans that they should like the Indians. These are facts of life with which we deal.

In these foreign policy situations, you always have the things over which we have no control; that is, the way people feel about each other, and these things, and the way that people are. People are what they are. Then we have things that we can influence; and of

course, this is where diplomacy comes into it. What are the parameters in which we can influence, and what are the weapons and the tools that we can use? And then, we have the things over which we have full control.

Q: That's really only our own activities.

JOHNSON: That's really only our own activities.

Q: Right.

JOHNSON: We don't control the other peoples. Apart from our own people, who think that we should be able to make anybody else do whatever we think that they should do, every foreign country, of course, that has a quarrel with its neighbor, thinks that if the United States only would exercise enough initiative, it could make its neighbors behave. It could make everybody else . . .

Q: Behave meaning agree with what it wants.

JOHNSON: Agree with what it . . .That's right.

Q: That influence, lack of influence, also applies not to changing governments in South Vietnam, but influencing the government in power. That is . . .

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. Sure. Well . . .

Q: . . . influencing the military policy of the DVN.

JOHNSON: Yes. Well, there's a part of the job. Again, you can do this within parameters. We have been doing it within the parameters in which we can operate, and I think you can see the results. You can tell the government, “You know, you should do a much better job of administering the provinces than you're doing. You ought to get better people out there.”

All right, where are they going to find the better people? Just saying these things doesn't do it.

Q: Is that what happened to, say, pacification? There just weren't the people and the effort to make the impact?

JOHNSON: That's a part of the problem. Of course, you've had tens of thousands of . . . Well, you have a government that's started with no training or no base for government during the colonial period. It started with virtually nothing in the way of background or experience. Then you've had ten thousands of the people murdered—government officials, village chiefs—that have been murdered throughout the years. And some of the best ones, obviously, were the ones that were murdered.

Q: Those have been targets.

JOHNSON: Those were the targets, of course. And so, your material with which the government had to work was just extremely limited; and no amount of exhortation is going to overcome that.

Q: That's right. Why, in the summer of 1965, did the Taylor-Johnson mission come back? Was there any specific reason? You felt the job had been done, at that point, that you all could do, or was there some policy . . . ?

JOHNSON: Well, it was agreed when we went out that we would go out for a year.

Q: Oh, I see.

JOHNSON: That was the understanding with which we went out. And we felt that—both of us felt—that we'd done about all that we could do in the situation. And it was accepted back here that we'd gone out for a year; and so we came back.

Q: As a man who had been there and been on the scene, did Mr. Johnson talk to you at length, or frequently, about your experiences there, once you returned?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. We, of course, saw him-saw him privately. Each of us saw him privately. We also saw him at NSC meetings. Oh, yes, there was a lot of discussion.

Q: Did he question you closely as to the very minor details, or specific details, trying to master the situation himself? Or was he just generally getting impressions?

JOHNSON: I would say in general, general questions. General questions, general terms, yes.

Q: Did you stay in the Vietnam play then, as Deputy Under Secretary for the period you were back here before you went to Japan?

JOHNSON: Yes, yes, yes. To a considerable degree, yes. Yes.

Q: What about the various peace initiatives of that period? Let's see. This would be the fall of '65. The Gullion mission came at that time, and the bombing pause, then, at the end of the year. Was there great debate on either of these?

JOHNSON: Gulllion mission, no. There wasn't any debate on that. George Ball was the—I worked with him on it, of course, fully informed—but I'd say George Ball took the lead on that. On the bombing pause, yes, there was a lot of debate. And I was in strong opposition to it myself; expressed my views to the President in meetings over in the White House on it. Because, I just couldn't believe that the other side would be so stupid as not to hold out the hope that there might be some peace talks as long as we continued the pause. It seemed to me just the natural reaction, inevitable reaction, on their side would be to hold out some hope of peace talk; or even get into some kind of peace talks without their really being any substance to it, as long as we held off the bombing. I felt that they were going to be able to; and under those circumstances, I felt it was going to be impossible for the

President to start it up again. And I thought we were getting ourselves into a trap. Well, they never sprung the trap.

Q: They had the chance and didn't do it.

JOHNSON: To this day, I can't understand why they didn't.

Q: When you talked to Mr. Johnson in this vein, did he express his view in this regard? What he thought about the advisability of the pause?

JOHNSON: No. In general, in these meetings, he'd keep his own counsel. I must say I always found him ready, and I never felt any inhibitions at expressing contrary views. I'd say, almost all the time, I found myself in agreement with Secretary Rusk. He and I tended to look at these things at very much . . . But the Secretary always made it clear that I was entirely free to express my own views. I did so when the occasion arose. I never felt any inhibitions in doing so.

Q: As a professional diplomat who's perhaps aware of the niceties of that profession, what kind of impression did the sort of "hoop-la" diplomacy of Christmas 1965 and early '66 make on you? The sending out of the high level people to all the capitals of the world?

JOHNSON: I was opposed to it. But, I must say, in retrospect, I think it worked out all right. I think I was wrong.

Q: It didn't turn into a disaster.

JOHNSON: It didn't turn into a disaster, no. Of course, that type of thing tends to go against the grain of fellows like myself.

Q: That's why I wanted to be sure to ask you.

JOHNSON: Yes, it does. It does. But I said at the time, and then I say again, that in retrospect, I think it worked out well. I think the President's political instinct on this was sound.

Q: Nothing, in your opinion, turned up as a result of that?

JOHNSON: Nothing. Nothing happened, but I thought that we improved our position, our international position on it.

Q: Then was there a great debate on resuming the bombing, as you feared there might be?

JOHNSON: No, there wasn't, because the other side made it easy for us to do so.

Q: I see. So there was no argument that the . . . ?

JOHNSON: There wasn't any particular argument about that. There was an argument about the timing. That was all.

Q: Then when did you go to Japan in '66?

JOHNSON: Let's see. September, or was it . .

Q: In the fall?

JOHNSON: It was in the fall. I think that it was in September of '66.

Q: So there's this period from, say, February through September when you were still here. Are there any episodes? That's kind of a dead spot in Vietnam, my thinking on Vietnam.

JOHNSON: Yes, it is. There weren't . . . I can't recall. . .

Q: No landmark decisions?

JOHNSON: . . . any landmark decision during that period, no. Just more of the same and not too much in depth consideration of the different approaches. Yes, yes.

Q: Then you got your ambition, as you called it a while ago, to go to Japan.

JOHNSON: My wife's ambition.

Q: Your wife's ambition.

JOHNSON: Let me say, I also shared it.

Q: What were the circumstances behind that change? Did Mr. Johnson call you over and tell you now was the time?

JOHNSON: No. Let's see. I don't know. I got my . . . I think it was the Secretary that told me first. This was all dependent on when Ed Reischauer came back. It was understood all along—at least to me—that when Ed came out, why, I was going to go. And this was simply dependent on when Ed came out. And you recall [Senator Mike] Mansfield, particularly, was strongly urging that Ed stay there. And my own attitude was that Ed had done a first class job. I'd known Ed thirty years or more, also.

Q: He's one that I have interviewed in the past.

JOHNSON: Yes. And my feeling was he'd done a first class job; and I didn't want to on personal or official grounds at all to expedite his coming out at all. It was entirely his decision as to when he wanted to do it, and I was perfectly content to wait until he decided to do it.

Q: But Mr. Johnson didn't give you any specific instructions in regard to what he wanted done or would like to see done?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. Of course, I had talked with him before I went out. But there weren't any major issues that—involving the President particularly that were involved at the time. So it wasn't a matter of any particular instructions from him.

Q: How much, as Ambassador in Japan, did you get to stay in the Vietnam considerations? At all? Was your view solicited?

JOHNSON: No. My views were never solicited. However, people going to and from Vietnam at all levels, of course, frequently were passing through Tokyo; and naturally, I saw them. I kept in close contact with the situation through high level people passing through. In fact, in some ways, I felt I was able to keep track of things better in Japan than I was back here. I saw people that normally you wouldn't see.

Q: You saw people going both ways.

JOHNSON: Both ways, yes. And then in Japan, also, junior officers, both foreign service and military people, were coming through, that I'd known, who would stop and see me. So I spent a considerable amount of time simply trying to keep track of what was going on, not that I had any responsibility for it. Naturally, I had a deep interest in it. And of course, it deeply affected my position in Japan.

Q: I was going to say, Mr. Reischauer indicated, in his book at least, that at least one time in Japan there was considerable irritation with American policy in Vietnam. Was that true by the time that you got there?

JOHNSON: I've always thought-'Ed and I have differed on this—I've always thought that this was not as much an issue in Japan as he felt that it was. I've always said . . Let me say, I shouldn't say I was never consulted. On the bombing halt, I was consulted in general on that, and on some other moves, also, my views were invited. But insofar as Japan was concerned, the position I always took was that we should ignore Japan.

Q: As far as Vietnam was concerned?

JOHNSON: As far as Vietnam was concerned, that we should go ahead and do what we felt was necessary. If it came out all right, fine and good. If, because we listened to or were influenced by the views of Japan, it didn't come out all right, it would quickly be forgotten that we were being influenced by their views. It would simply be recognized that we'd failed. So the thing to do was to go ahead and do what we felt needed to be done without regard for the views of Japan. That was the position I always took on this.

As far as Japanese attitudes are concerned, the best indication of this, that I had, was at the time of the March 31 speech of President Johnson—March 31 a year ago—on the cessation of the bombing of the northern part of North Vietnam. With a liberal assist from the American press, this was universally interpreted by the Japanese press as being a prelude to a complete withdrawal and a reversal of policy on Vietnam. I spent some five hours alone with the Prime Minister two nights following that speech, trying to convince him this wasn't the case. He was terribly concerned that it was in fact the case.

Q: He was opposed to it being the case, I take it, you're saying?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. Oh, he was very deeply so. And I had nothing to go on except that speech and my own instinct on the situation. And I tried to reassure him that this wasn't the case. And then all kinds of politicians from the—I wouldn't say the extreme left—but from the center and the right came directly or indirectly to me on this subject. They were terribly concerned. Those who had been opposing our policy, and were speaking against our policy, often, in effect said, “You know we've been saying these things because this is necessary, here in Japan, to our political situation. But, God, we never thought that you would listen to us.”

Q: “Please don't take it seriously.”

JOHNSON: “Please don't take it seriously.” This was a real shock to them in Japan; the thought that we were really going to withdraw.

Q: I see. That's important. I'm glad that you recounted that episode.

JOHNSON: Yes.

Q: What about other Japanese issues? Did Mr. Johnson take any personal activity or interests in such things as the Okinawa problem, or . . . ?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, yes. He did. See, I came back here in November of '67 with Prime Minister Sato at the time of his visit.

Q: Oh, you accompanied him, or came back at that time?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. I came back. In fact, I came back ahead of him to do the preparatory work here on his visit. And then I went out to Seattle in the President's plane to meet him, and came back here to Washington with him. See, I'd come back earlier. We'd had the Cabinet Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs in September, I think, and then Sato came in November.

Q: I think that's right.

JOHNSON: I was back here both times. We'll have to check those dates, but I think that's roughly right. Okinawa was beginning to emerge as an issue at that time, and the communique was .the subject of very, very intense negotiation, the drafting on this. In general, Secretary Rusk and I negotiated with the Japanese on this. The President didn't take too much direct personal interest in this, but he accepted what we'd worked out. However, he did take—a good example again, I think, of how he works—he had two intense interests at the time. One was aid to Indonesia—the President, President Johnson did—and the other was TV education in South Vietnam.

On aid to Indonesia during his private talk with Sato.—which I only learned about, of course, through the interpreter when I got the account through that channel, to put it in crude terms, Johnson twisted Sato's arm very, very hard, pointing out how important it was to us here and to his ability to deliver to the U.S And he rung out of Sato a commitment on that, which Sato: lived to regret because, you know, when President Johnson wanted something out of people, he usually got it, whether they were willing it or not.

Q: You're right.

JOHNSON: And he got it from Sato. I wouldn't say Sato didn't know what he was doing, but he hadn't intended to give any such commitment. And I was called upon often, after he returned back to Japan, to remind him of this. He always winced when I did.

No, I shouldn't say I just learned about it from the interpreter. They had their private meeting; and then they came into the Cabinet Room where the rest of us were, and Johnson announced that he had received the commitment from Sato. You see, to everybody else, to the consternation of Sato's staff. And Sato didn't contradict him.

Q: He just sat silently and smiled.

JOHNSON: He just sat silent, yes. The other was, the President had then been on a . . . Not long before that . . . Where had he been? Anyway, he'd been through American Samoa. Had he been down to Australia, New Zealand?

Q: Yes, that was just after the—I believe—the Australian trip, perhaps.

JOHNSON: Yes. And he'd seen this use of television there for instructional use in the schools and was very enthusiastic about this. And he gave Prime Minister Sato a big selling job on this as far as Vietnam was concerned and what Japan could do on this.

Q: Non-military aid.

JOHNSON: Non-military aid; and a very sound idea, and a very, very good one, as a matter of fact. I followed up on this, of course, after I got back, and we were making considerable progress with getting the Japanese involved in this. Then the Tet offensive came along, and the whole thing fell all apart. Before I left, I was trying to get it going again, but . . .

Q: What about Mr. Johnson as a personal diplomat here? Is this really . . . When he puts the treatment on somebody like Sato does that leave lingering difficulties and troubles for the future?

JOHNSON: Yes, it does somewhat.

Q: And also problems for the Ambassador at the time?

JOHNSON: Yes, yes, yes. It does somewhat, but I don't say Sato, in a case like that, was resentful—or not deeply resentful. He felt an awful lot of pressure was put on him, and he felt the pressure. It's not the Japanese way of doing things.

Q: You know, some of the critics have made something of this business of style that's supposed to irritate everybody. You don't think that it's, for the long run at least, a serious hindrance in international relations.

JOHNSON: No. I think people had respect for him. The style, of course, was a problem with the President. My own general observation is that I found, both-in so far as I had any basis for judgment—on domestic policy and international policy, it was not what he did, but the way he would sometimes do it. This waiting for a long time; waiting until the last minute; and all of a sudden making up his mind; then giving everybody else the impression they had to—particularly abroad—they had to jump and jump through the hoops, if I can put it that way; it did create problems. No question about that.

Q: It was not necessarily the decision, but the technique in arriving at it.

JOHNSON: The technique of arriving at it and implementing it, yes. That's right.

Q: Are there other Japanese episodes—the NPT or the Pueblo that Mr. President got into?

JOHNSON: No, no.

Q: You'd been Ambassador to Czechoslovakia back in the fifties. Did he talk to you about Czechoslovakia in August of '68 when that came up?

JOHNSON: No. See, I wasn't there?

Q: You were gone.

JOHNSON: I wasn't there.

Q: Nobody consulted you .

JOHNSON: No.

Q: . . . as a man who had been there for a long time?

JOHNSON: No.

Q: Are there any other topics? I don't want to cut you off. You're being very patient here, and you've given me lots of time.

JOHNSON: Yes. I'll have to cut this in about five minutes.

Q: Anything you'd like to add on here?

JOHNSON: No. He was a man of moods, of course, as we all know. He could be so thoughtful and so kind, as I recounted, in many ways. In my personal relationship with him, I have nothing but respect for him. I was called back here New Years' Eve this last year

to talk about taking this present job with the new Administration. And, let's see, that was January 1 and January 2, I guess it was. Well, anyway, it was decided that I was going to take this job. This was on Friday; and then Saturday, I was going up to New York where President Nixon was going to make the announcement. And I asked if I could simply pay a courtesy call on President Johnson before I left, and would not have been surprised at all if he just didn't feel able to see me, but I thought I should make the gesture. He asked me to come over, and I recall that I went over there about six o'clock. Walt Rostow and I went in. I had stopped down to see Walt first; and then we went up to see him; and he was in the little room there off the Oval Room. And we sat there about an hour and a half, part of the time just looking at the TV, as he would do, and the other time sort of reminiscing, nostalgic memories, and that type of thing. A very, as I was going to say, very thoughtful and very friendly. And the fact that I didn't quite know how he might take my taking a job with the new Administration.

Q: Right.

JOHNSON: But . . .

Q: No problem.

JOHNSON: No problem whatsoever, and I had a little feeling maybe he'd helped to encourage this. I'm not sure.

Q: That might be a good thing to ask as a kind of a closer here. You are now the top ranking career officer in the State Department and have been a high ranking one for a long time. What about Mr. Johnson and the career service? Do you think he distrusted it, or particularly trusted, or had any particular feeling at all about the career service as opposed to the political appointees?

JOHNSON: Well, it's very hard to generalize. My own relations with him were, I felt, always good. The State Department is an institution, a career service, as such. I think he had

some reservations about it. I don't know. I really just don't have a basis for judgment, He'd make these cracks about these young whipper-snappers, over here in State, shooting off at the mouth, that type of thing. I never quite knew how serious he was. But, of course, in the latter days of his Administration, particularly, he appointed a lot of non-career officers, a lot of political officers, political appointments, abroad. Some of which, I felt, were not well chosen.

Q: I'm sure the career service wouldn't be very happy with [this].

JOHNSON: No, it wasn't, as a matter of fact. We all expect, and I think it's proper, to have political appointments to our missions abroad. But I'm saying that some of the appointments he made .

Q: Oh, I see.

JOHNSON: . . . I don't think, were Very well chosen. You had a little feeling that it was purely political without any real regard to the capabilities of the man with respect to the post that he was going to.

Q: You've got history at your mercy here for another couple of minutes. If you want to say anything, do so.

JOHNSON: No, I think that's it.

Q: You've been very patient.

End of interview